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SUBJECT: EAST CHINA VIEWS ON PEACEFUL RISE AND HARMONIOUS WORLD

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CLASSIFIED BY: Simon Schuchat , DPO, U.S. Consulate, Shanghai,
Department of State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. According to East China scholars, China's foreign policy doctrine is moving beyond the concept of "Peaceful Development" to "Harmonious World." President Hu, determined to put his stamp on China's foreign policy, had initially supported the "Peaceful Rise" concept promoted by foreign policy advisor Zheng Bijian. High-level opposition to the term "rise," however, led Zheng to devise the current "Harmonious World" formulation. Conferences and speeches have focused on the "Harmonious World" concept, including a recent Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Conference reported septel. East China scholars also tell us that while "peaceful rise" had been removed from the official foreign policy lexicon, the concept still retained explanatory power and was making a comeback. End Summary.

Peacefully Developing Out of Conflict

¶2. (C) In a June discussion, Director of the Russian and Central Asian Studies department of the well-connected Shanghai Institute of International Studies (SIIS) Lu Gang provided Poloff with a history of the "Peaceful Development" and "Peaceful Rise" concepts. He said the "Peaceful Rise" concept formulated by Zheng Bijian, China Reform Forum President and one of Beijing's top foreign policy advisors, was born out of Zheng's desire to make China's foreign policy catch up with China's 21st century realities. According to Lu, China's prevailing--and outmoded--formulation, "Peaceful Development," had emerged in the early 1980s after Deng Xiaoping reached preeminence. In the 1970s, China's foreign policy had been aimed at playing the United States off against Russia in order to avoid a conflict with either. After Deng began implementing a policy of rapid economic growth to strengthen regime legitimacy, a foreign affairs academic named He Fang proposed that, rather than manipulating international tensions, China would do better to minimize them over in order to create a favorable international environment to allow for Chinese export-led economic growth.

¶3. (C) He's "Peaceful Development" formulation, as it was known, held that, in order to maintain legitimacy and stability, China's economy needed to develop. In order for China's economy to develop, it needed a peaceful international situation. In other words, China's foreign policy should focus on resolving political struggles with other countries to foster economic cooperation, which would allow for expansion of exports to drive domestic growth. Deng -- at the behest of his advisor Huan Xiang -- adopted the policy, which continued after his death. By 2000, China's entire foreign policy was aimed at promoting an export-friendly international system.

¶4. (SBU) However, China was too big and its development happened too fast, according to Lu. Towards the middle of the 1990s, other countries began worrying that China had ulterior motives and was "rising" militarily as well as economically. Those fears were bolstered after China's escalation of tensions in the Taiwan Straits in 1995-96. Moreover, other countries began worrying about China's claim on natural resources, oil, and food, fears epitomized by Lester Brown's 1995 book "Who Will Feed China."

Rising out of Development

¶5. (C) According to Lu, by 2000 Zheng had reached the conclusion that the "Peaceful Development" concept was out of date and over the next three years formulated his "Peaceful Rise" concept. Zheng argued that foreigners had already concluded that China was rising and had moved past "development." China needed to openly recognize that it was becoming an important international and regional player while at the same time reassure other nations that China had no ill intentions and was still committed to maintaining a peaceful international environment in order to continue developing. China needed to mold the international environment not just to create a favorable export environment, but also to allow China

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to take its rightful place on the world stage.

¶6. (C) Lu said that initially, President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao embraced Zheng's "Peaceful Rise" concept, and used it in some of their speeches. According to Lu, Zheng had become "close friends" with Hu when Hu was head of the Central Party School and Zheng was his deputy. Lu believed that Zheng had even served as Hu's personal secretary at one point. Although also respected by former President Jiang Zemin, Zheng was loyal to Hu.

¶7. (C) During an August 4 discussion with Poloffs, Fudan University's Center for American Studies Director Shen Dingli said that initially some influential Shanghai scholars had supported the "Peaceful Rise" formulation. For instance, Vice President of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS) Huang Renwei and Director of the SASS Institute of World Economy Zhang Youwen oversaw the SASS publication of five books on Peaceful Rise in 2004 in an effort to ingratiate themselves with Zheng.

¶8. (C) According to Lu, despite high-level support, Zheng's ideas met with bureaucratic resistance. Old-timers in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs argued that China could not use the word "rise" in its foreign policy formulation lest it signal to the rest of the world that--never mind the word "peaceful"--China had hegemonic intentions. Shen told us that Jiang had sided with the older diplomats and opposed the new formulation, arguing that China would not be peaceful if Taiwan declared independence.

¶9. (C) Shen asserted that, at an April 23, 2004, Politburo meeting, on the eve of the Boao Forum, party leaders discussed the "Peaceful Rise" phrase and decided three things: 1) China was not afraid to say "Peaceful Rise"; 2) it was not necessary, however, to use the phrase, and; 3) it was better to say

"Peaceful Development." During an August 7 conversation, Jiaotong University's Center for National Strategy Studies Vice Director Zhuang Jianzhong affirmed that the Politburo meeting had taken place. He glossed the decision as meaning that the leadership would refrain from using "Peaceful Rise" in its official policy documents and official speeches, but that it was acceptable for scholars to use the phrase. Zhuang noted that, even after the Politburo meeting, Jiang had visited the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in his capacity of Chairman of the Central Military Commission to try to convince the scholars there not to use the "Peaceful Rise" formulation.

¶10. (C) Shen noted that some, including himself, objected to the "Peaceful Rise" terminology for other reasons. China had "risen" already in 1949, with Mao's proclamation of the founding of the PRC. Ever since China's initial "rise," Shen said, there had been nothing peaceful about it. Domestically, Shen (protect) cited the anti-rightist campaigns of the 1950s, the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, the Tiananmen Massacre, and the killing of peasants in Guangdong earlier this year as evidence of the Party's pugnacious nature. Shen also pointed to the numerous border skirmishes with India, Russia, and Vietnam, as well as the government's killing of 12 Vietnamese sailors last year to demonstrate China's international bellicosity.

The Rising Development of a Harmonious World

¶11. (C) Lu believed that Zheng had accepted the reality of the political situation and had moved beyond his initial "Peaceful Rise" notion to the new "Harmonious World" concept. According to Lu, in 2000--the same time Zheng had been formulating his initial "Peaceful Rise" concept--the central leadership adopted a "strategic perspective" that called for maintaining a peaceful international climate until at least 2020. Major world conflict should be avoided during this 20 year period to give China a "strategic opportunity" to develop into an economic and military power. Although China would focus on avoiding war during this 20 year period, Lu acknowledged that Taiwan was the one wildcard and China would not hesitate to use force to bring Taiwan back into the fold.

¶12. (C) According to Lu, Zheng assessed that if China was to peacefully rise and fully realize its "strategic opportunity" it must focus more heavily on resolving domestic problems. In addition to maintaining a good foreign environment, issues

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associated with China's "peaceful development" to date, such as the growing gap between rich and poor, the east-west gap, and the urban-rural gap, needed to be resolved or else China's "strategic opportunity" would be lost. To that end, Zheng supported and promoted Hu's "Harmonious Society" and "Scientific Development Concepts" as important components of China's overall foreign policy. Moreover, situations that embroiled China in conflict with other nations or non-state actors meant that its resources would be siphoned away from resolving domestic tensions that threatened regime stability. In other words, China's foreign policy could no longer focus solely on maintaining a favorable export environment, but needed to focus on international stability to allow China to clean up its domestic problems. Cooperation on issues outside of trade relationships needed to be given greater importance. Lu noted, for instance, that China understood the emerging threat of global terrorism to their "strategic opportunity" and had attached great importance to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as a result.

¶13. (C) During a late August meeting, Nanjing University Professor Gu Su agreed with Lu that Zheng was the primary driver of the "Harmonious World" concept. Gu said that this new foreign policy tack meant an emphasis on cooperation instead of "rise," although, he noted, the "rise" was understood in the formulation. According to Shen, Hu Jintao had been looking for

an overarching vision and theory he could use to leave his mark on foreign policy and, indeed, Party doctrine. Shen said that Zheng, assisted by Huang Renwei, had developed the "Harmonious World" concept to provide Hu with what he was looking for.

¶14. (C) Professor Zhuang noted that President Hu had delivered his first major speech on "Harmonious World" to the United Nations on September 15, 2005, marking an important shift in policy. According to the speech as reported in Xinhua, Hu's foreign policy vision for achieving "harmony" included: strengthening multilateralism; encouraging mutually beneficial cooperation to achieve common prosperity; respecting different civilizations and encouraging "inclusiveness" so "all civilizations [can] coexist harmoniously and accommodate each other"; and reforming the United Nations. (Comment: Although the term "Harmonious World" had been used previously, Hu's September 15 speech evidently marked the first time Hu had spoken specifically and to such a broad audience about the topic and thus marked the beginning of a shift in policy orientation. End comment.)

¶15. (C) Like "Peaceful Rise," however, "Harmonious World" was not without its critics. Professor Shen said that during the December 2005 "Annual Review of the International Situation" at SIIS, "Harmonious World" came under serious attack from the older foreign policy community, including scholars and former ambassadors. Again, in April 2006, the theory had been subjected to "strong internal debate," with some "realists" arguing that the Party needed to avoid putting "Harmony" above all else. These "realists" feared that it would send the message to the United States that China would cave to foreign pressure on most issues in the interest of preserving international harmony.

"Peaceful Rise" Remains Important, if Not Official

¶16. (C) Despite the emergence of the "Harmonious World" policy formulation, the "Peaceful Rise" concept has remained an important academic formulation that has regained popularity in recent months. Professor Zhuang attributed the resurgence of interest in "Peaceful Rise" to the United States's new opinion of China. Zhuang said that the U.S. "stakeholder" formulation implied that China was rising in importance and that the United States had accepted China's rise as a fact. Chinese scholars were taking U.S. policymakers at their word and felt less inhibited about using the word "rise." In addition, growing concern among many in the United States over China's growing economic influence and energy consumption had led many U.S. academics to use "rise" to describe China as a threat to American global economic dominance including access to energy and other natural resources. In response, more and more Chinese scholars were reverting to the "Peaceful Rise" formulation to address these American concerns, arguing that while China was, indeed, becoming a more important global player, it did not have belligerent intentions.

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